



National Park Service  
with **Teaching MUSEUM** Collections  
Management Program  
<http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum>

The National Park Service *Teaching with Museum Collections* provides lesson plans for teachers to use National Park Service museum collections in student-centered educational activities. The collections tell the story of America; its peoples, cultures, varied habitats, significant events, and ideas that continue to inspire the world. *Teaching with Museum Collections* emphasizes the links between the 'real things,' the collections, and the sites where those collections were found, collected, or used. National Park Service collections include cultural objects, natural history specimens, archival documents and photographs. Lesson plans link to national education standards.

### Lesson Plan Elements

- ☐ **Title:** Home to More Than a President
- ☐ **Developer:** Darla Hostettler, Museum Technician, Harry S Truman National Historic Site
- ☐ **Grade Level:** K-4
- ☐ **Length of Lesson:** 2-3 days, 30-45 minute sessions, may be adapted as needed
- ☐ **Overview of Collection-based lesson plan**

**Park Name:** Harry S Truman National Historic Site

☐ **Lesson Theme:**

Learning about family history and its ties to community life through the study of family artifacts such as those found at home as well as those in the museum collection and the on-line image gallery at the Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

☐ **Essential Question:**

What can the objects in the museum collection of the Harry S Truman National Historic Site tell us about the life of four generations of the Gates/Wallace/Truman Family and their ties to the community?

## □Museum Collections Used in This Lesson Plan:

The objects used in this lesson plan will include several items visible along the tour route of the Harry S Truman Presidential Home as well as other items in the museum collection that are not on public display but have images available on the American Visionary Website. Large format views of the objects can be seen on the American Visionary Website at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/museums/exhibits/hstr/overview.html>. A virtual tour can be taken of the Truman Home.



### **Grandfather Clock (1790-1810)**

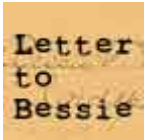
George and Elizabeth Gates brought this clock from Illinois to Missouri in 1866. It stands in the Truman's living room at 219 N. Delaware, Independence.

Maple, Brass. H 218.4, W 45.1, D 22.8 cm HSTR 83



### **Epergne (1883)**

Made by Wilcox Silver Plate Company. Epergnes were used as elaborate table centerpieces and held, fruit, flowers and nuts. Given to Madge Gates and David Wallace, Bess Truman's parents, as a wedding gift from the groomsmen. Entwined initials "G and W" representing the joining of the Gates and Wallace families and "June 13, 1883." Silver. H 65.3, W 14.2, D 16.5 cm HSTR 761



### **Letter (1892)**

Bess' Grandfather Gates wrote her this letter while on Vacation in New Mexico.

Paper. L 25.0, W 19.9 cm HSTR 30036



### **Decorative Plate (1947)**

Made by Don Allen, Denver. Wedding Anniversary plate. Margaret's birth date "Feb 17, Margaret, 1924" and "Trinity Episcopal Church, Independence, MO" is included. Earthenware. H 5.7 D 34.6 cm HSTR 32



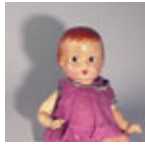
### **Childhood Garments of Margaret Truman (c1926)**

Cap with Pleated Brim. Silk. L 20.2, W 30.0 cm HSTR 25461

Cap with Feather on Brim. Silk. L 15.3, W 16.4 cm HSTR 25463

Shoes. Mary Jane Style. Patent Leather. H 4.1, W 4.6. D 13.8 cm HSTR 24141a,b

Shoes. Patent Leather. H 4.5, W 4.1, D 12.7 cm HSTR 24139a,b



**Doll (c1930)**

Young Margaret Truman's painted doll with moveable limbs.  
Composition, cotton. L 33.6, W 17.7 cm HSTR 25125



**First Lady Portrait of Bess Wallace Truman (May 1952)**

By Greta Kempton. The Trumans brought this half-length portrait of Bess Wallace Truman back to Independence after leaving the Presidency. Kempton was subsequently commissioned to paint a copy for the White House and the Truman Library. Oil on Canvas.  
L 102.8, W 87.2 cm HSTR 467

**National Education Standards:**

Topic 1, National Standards in History for Grades K-4: Living and Working Together in Families and Communities, Now and Long Ago.

Standard 1: Family Life Now and in the Recent Past; Family Life in Various Places Long Ago.

**Student Learning Objectives:**

The student will be able to investigate a family history for at least two generations, identify various family members and their connections in order to construct a time line.

The student will be able to compare and contrast family life now with family life in the local community or state long ago.

The student will be able to critically analyze objects relating to their own family and place these objects in historical context.

**Background and Historical Context:**

The home of Harry S Truman, 33<sup>rd</sup> President of the United States is more than just the home of a former president. Except for time spent in Washington during his political career, it is the only home he shared with his wife, Bess, from the time of their marriage in 1919 until his death in 1972. The house was constructed in 1867 by George Porterfield Gates, the maternal grandfather of Mrs. Truman, and at one point in 1924 was home to four generations of the Gates/Wallace/Truman family: Elizabeth Gates (Bess' grandmother), Madge Gates Wallace (Bess' mother), Bess Truman and Mary Margaret Truman (the Trumans' only child). The home was bequeathed to the citizens of the United States when Mrs. Truman died in 1982. Received by the National Park Service in 1983, the home contained many family possessions. Many of these objects are visible along the public tour route.

#### ☐ **Materials used in this lesson Plan:**

- Teacher-provided items similar to the museum objects are essential to the collection-based lesson plan. Locate and use items that can be safely handled by the students and that are appropriate for your classroom museum.
- How to Read an Object Worksheet (provided with this lesson plan)
- Family Tree Diagram (provided with this lesson plan)
- Computer with internet access
- Teacher-laminated photos of museum objects from the HSTR collection
- Teacher-provided art/other supplies as needed

#### ☐ **Vocabulary**

*Artifact: an object produced or shaped by human workmanship*

*Epergne: an elaborate table centerpiece typically designed to hold fruit, flowers or nuts*

*Family Tree: a listing of family members*

*Generation: a body of living beings constituting a single step in the line of descent from an ancestor*

*Heirloom: something of special value handed from one generation to another*

*Maternal: of or relating to a mother*

*Museum: a place where objects are exhibited*

*Paternal: of or relating to a father*

*Portrait: a pictorial representation (usually a painting) of a person generally showing the face*

*Reading an Object: giving a detailed description of an object*

*Virtual Tour: visiting a museum via its website.*

#### ☐ **Teacher Tips**

- Download and laminate color prints of the museum objects used in the lesson plan.
- Use online collections: objects, documents, maps and photographs to further implement student inquiry and to address student learning objectives.

□ **Activity 1: Introduction and Warm Up “How to Read an Object”**

Set up a mini-museum in your classroom using objects that the students can safely handle.

Offer the students some examples to start the discussion. Some simple questions might be:  
Have you ever visited a museum? What type of museum was it? What types of objects were on display?

Tell students they will be using objects from a National Park Service site as a source of learning and information. Explain that they will learn to look very closely at an object or set of objects to deduce historical, cultural and social information and to draw conclusions about people, events, and life then and now. Ask questions that draw on observational skills, and develop activities that exercise powers of deduction, inference, and creativity based on this introductory lesson.

Once the students are familiar with how to “read” an object, hand out the “Artifact Reading Worksheet” included with this lesson. Have them “read” an object from the mini-museum or ask them to read an object in their home and come to class prepared to discuss it.

□ **Activity 2: Virtual Tour** (<http://www.cr.nps.gov/museums/exhibits/hstr/overview.html>.)

Provide the students background information on President Truman and his extended family. If an actual site visit is not possible, take a virtual tour of the Harry S Truman Home. Point out the specific objects that can be seen on the tour. Use laminated photos of the museum objects listed in the “Museum Collections Used” section of this lesson plan.

Based on the objects viewed, have the students make a list of the ways each generation lived life differently (technology, communication, leisure activities, etc.). Compare the students’ lists with a teacher-compiled list to see if the student conclusions were correct.

Possible examples:

For entertainment/leisure time families would gather around the radio after dinner.  
Communication today is more frequently done through cell phones and email.  
More and more fathers are staying home with their children.  
The way many people use cell phones to tell time instead of a watch.

Possible questions:

What is the object?  
How might the object have been used?  
Do you have similar objects in your home?  
Who did they belong to?

□ **Activity 3: Generational and Community Connections**

Provide the students an adapted family timeline of the residents of the Truman Home (additional information has been included with this lesson plan). Look at the list and discuss the family members living in the Truman Home together at different points in time. How does this compare to the students' experience?

Have the students construct a family tree going back at least 3 generations if possible. Use the chart that is included with this lesson plan or a teacher-supplied chart. If necessary ask the students to take their chart home and request help from their parents. Give the students the option to share photos of their ancestors if they wish.

Ask the students if they have a favorite story about their grandparents.

Possible questions:

- How many generations are living in your family?
- What did your grandparents do for a living?
- Where do they or did they live?
- What types of community activities have your family members been involved in?
- How many generations of your family live in your home?
- What might be possible reasons for the decrease in multi-generational families today?  
(ie—people more mobile, increase in elderly care)

**Resources consulted:**

- National Center for History in the Schools
- Harry S Truman National Historic Site
- Home to a People's President*
- The Truman's of Independence: Historic Resource Study*

**Wrap-up activities:**

Students will be able to answer simple fill-in-the-blank questions regarding the information given to them during this lesson.

A wrap-up activity sample quiz is included.

## Activity 1

### **Artifact Reading Worksheet: What Artifacts Reveal About the Past and the People Who Used Them**

#### **1. WHAT IS THE ARTIFACT?**

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#### **2. WHAT IS THE ARTIFACT MADE OF?**

Describe the material from which the object was made: bone, pottery, metal, wood, stone, leather, glass, paper, cardboard, cotton, wood, plastic, other material.

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#### **3. SPECIAL QUALITIES OF THE ARTIFACT**

Describe how it looks and feels: shape, color, texture, size, weight, movable parts, anything printed, stamped or written on it.

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#### **4. USES OF THE ARTIFACT**

A. What might it have been used for? \_\_\_\_\_

B. Who might have used it? \_\_\_\_\_

C. Where might it have been used? \_\_\_\_\_

D. When might it have been used? \_\_\_\_\_

#### **5. WHAT DOES THE ARTIFACT TELL US?**

A. What does it tell us about technology of the time in which it was used?

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B. What does it tell us about the life and times of the people who made it and

used it? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C. Can you name a similar item today? \_\_\_\_\_

**6. BRING A SKETCH, A PHOTOGRAPH, OR THE ARTIFACT LISTED IN 5C TO CLASS.**

## Activity 2

### Possible Discussion Topics/Additional Information

Rooms in houses such as the Truman Home were designed to be used for a single purpose. (Music Room, Study, Dining Room, Living Room/Parlor)

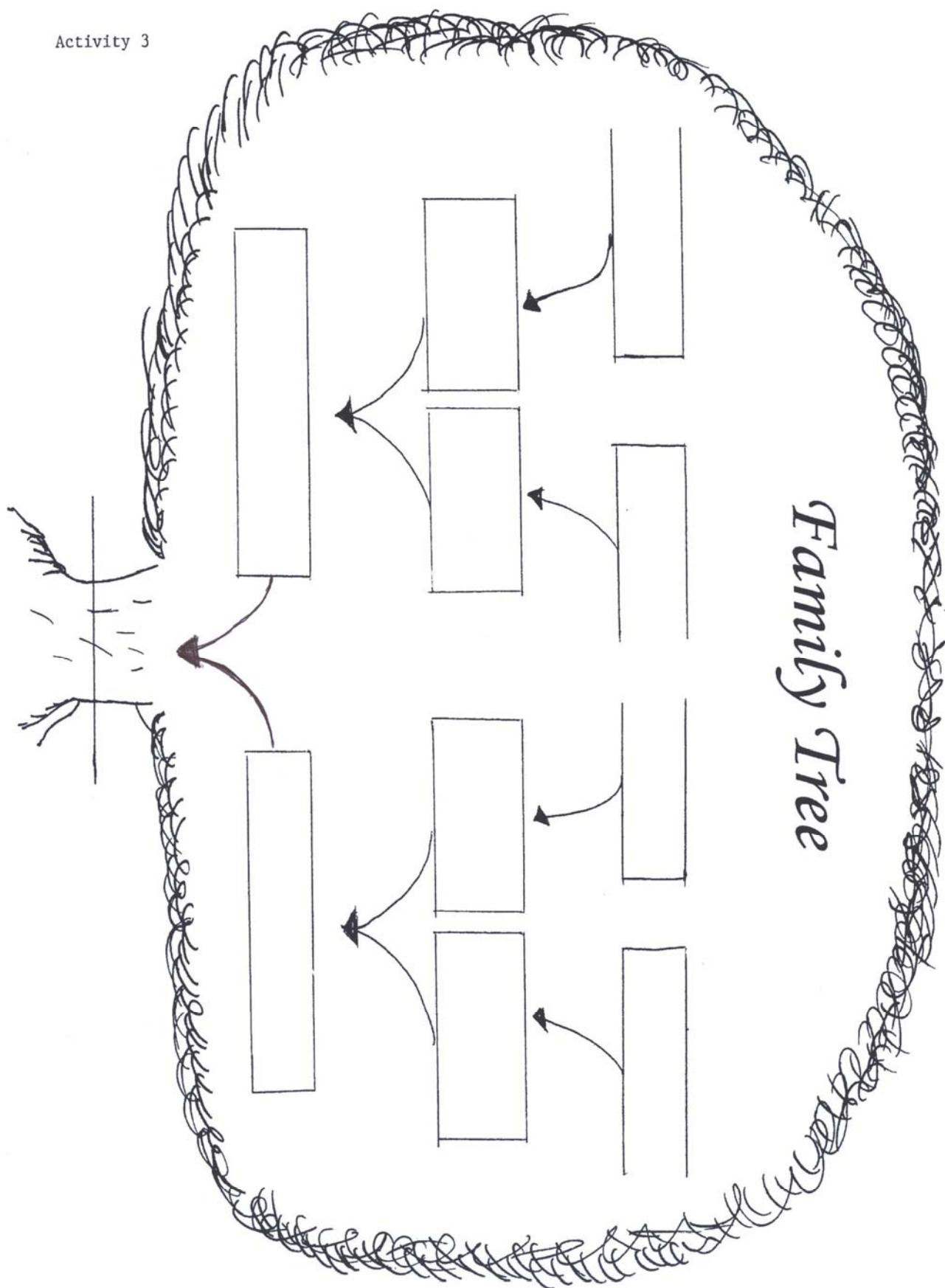
- ▶Do you have single purpose rooms in your home?
- ▶What are those rooms used for?

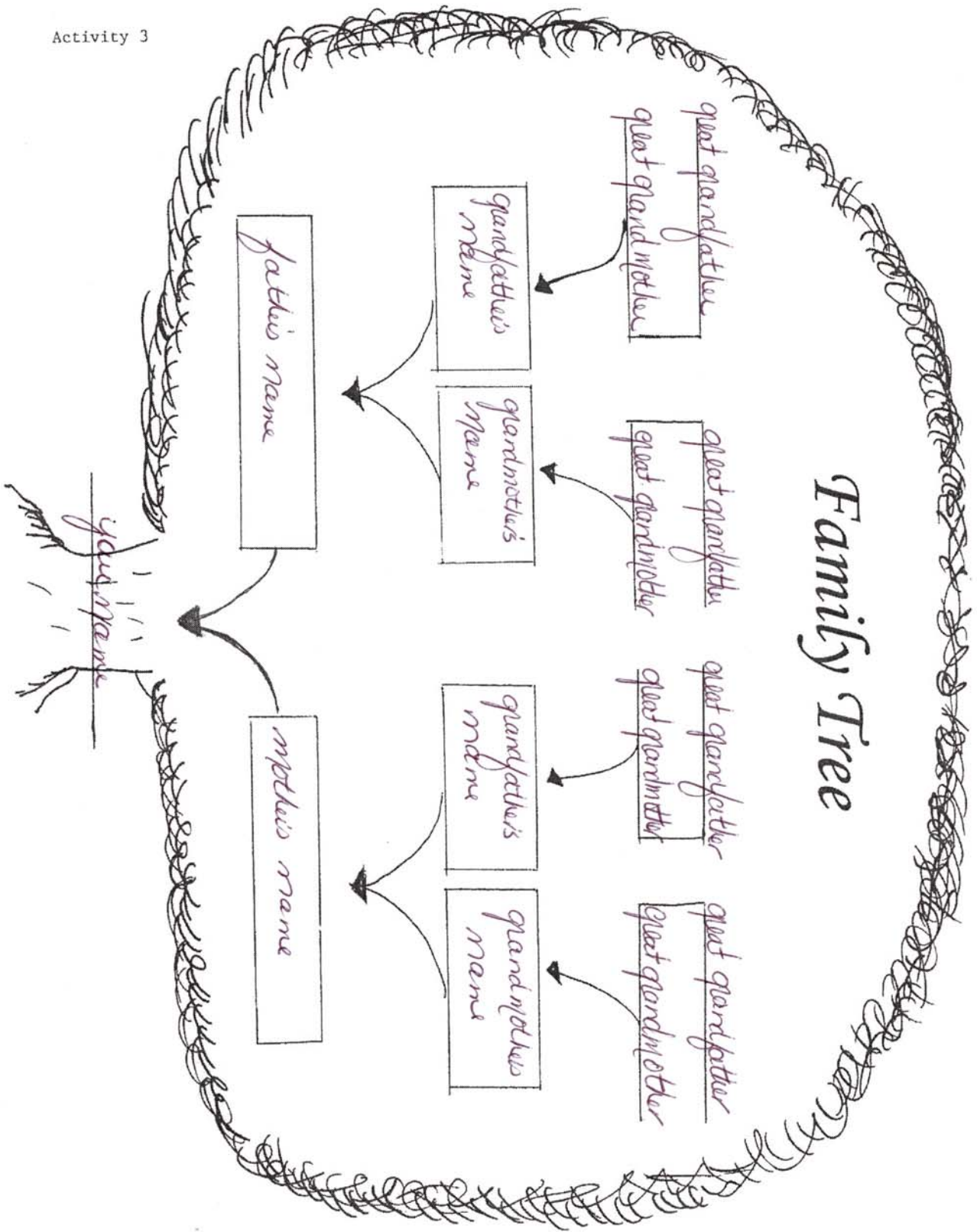
Music was an important and popular home amusement for many years. It may have involved singing, playing an instrument, listening to phonograph records or the radio. The Trumans' had a vast collection of phonograph records and a piano.

- ▶Does anyone in your family play a musical instrument?
- ▶What instrument do they play?
- ▶What kind of music does your family listen to?

Screen porches or sunrooms came into being when the desire for an indoor space which incorporated the outdoors became popular. In addition there was a lack of air conditioning in many homes. The screen porch that was added to the Truman Home in April 1950 afforded this type of space to the Trumans as well as giving them some degree of privacy from the sometimes prying eyes of the public and a well ventilated space to spend time during the hottest days of summer. This space is where President Truman read the newspapers every morning and Mrs. Truman played cards with her friends.

- ▶Does your home have a screen porch or sunroom?
- ▶Does your family use the space as the Trumans did?





Activity 3 (additional information):

Residents of 219 North Delaware Street

George Porterfield Gates (Maternal grandfather of Bess Wallace Truman)	1867-1918
Elizabeth Emery Gates (Maternal grandmother of Bess Wallace Truman)	1867-1924
Maud Gates (Daughter of G. P. Gates)	1867-1893
Myra Gates (Daughter of G. P. Gates)	1867-1893
Margaret "Madge" Gates Wallace (Daughter of G. P. Gates, mother of Bess Wallace Truman)	1867-1883; 1887-ca.1890; 1904-1952
G. Walter Gates (Son of G. P. Gates)	1868-ca.1895
Frank E. Gates (Son of G. P. Gates)	1871-ca.1887
Tillie Gates (Daughter of G. P. Gates)	1874-1877
Bessie Gates (Daughter of G. P. Gates)	1883-1884
David Willock Wallace (Husband of Madge Gates Wallace)	1887-ca.1890
Elizabeth "Bess" Wallace Truman (Wife of Harry S Truman)	1887-ca.1890; 1904-1982
Frank G. Wallace (Brother of Bess Truman)	1887-ca.1890; 1904-1915
George P. Wallace (Brother of Bess Truman)	1904-1916
David "Fred" Wallace (Brother of Bess Truman)	1904-1942
Christine Meyer Wallace (Wife of David "Fred" Wallace)	1933-1942
David Wallace (Son of David "Fred" & Christine Wallace)	1934-1942
Marian Wallace (Daughter of David "Fred" & Christine Wallace)	1937-1942
Harry S Truman (33rd President of U. S., husband of Bess Wallace)	1919-1972
Margaret Truman (Daughter of Harry and Bess Truman)	1924-1953

### **Wrap-up Activity: Sample Quiz**

Fill in the blanks:

1. A place where objects are exhibited: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Something of special value handed down from one generation to the next: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Of/or relating to a father: \_\_\_\_\_
4. An ornate centerpiece: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Giving a detailed description of an object: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Of/or relating to a mother: \_\_\_\_\_